

NEWS RELEASE



**Office of the Governor
Phil Bredesen**

**Office of the Attorney General
Robert E. Cooper, Jr.**

**Department of Commerce and Insurance
Commissioner Leslie A. Newman**

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GOVERNOR, ATTORNEY GENERAL AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND INSURANCE KEEPING WATCH ON FUEL SITUATION

Following reports of high gas prices in East Tennessee and throughout the state, Attorney General Bob Cooper and Department of Commerce and Insurance Commissioner Leslie Newman today announced the launch of a joint effort to examine whether certain businesses are engaging in gas price gouging.

Governor Bredesen is urging Tennesseans to exercise vigilance in their use of fuel during the temporary supply shortage caused by recent storms in the Gulf of Mexico.

"I encourage Tennesseans to be conscientious in their use of gasoline in the coming days as the nation's fuel infrastructure recovers from the recent storms," Bredesen said. "If you need gas, buy it, but if you don't need to refuel now, there's no reason to rush to the gas station to fill up. If you can wait to refuel, it's best to wait until supplies are replenished."

State officials continue to monitor the fuel situation in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike. The pipelines that supply much of the state's fuel are coming back on line with a limited flow of fuel.

As part of this effort, the Attorney General, and the Commissioners of the Department of Commerce and Insurance and the Department of Agriculture are requesting information from retailers who have generated complaints and are sending investigators out into the field.

“We are analyzing whether the spike in gasoline prices across Tennessee is the result of price gouging or a reasonable reaction to supply disruptions in the wake of Hurricane Ike,” Attorney General Cooper said. “We are concerned with the spike in gasoline prices in the state, and Knoxville, in particular, where gasoline prices are reported to be among the highest in the nation. There is a difference between profits and profiteering.”

Under Tennessee law, unreasonably raising the price of essential goods, commodities or services in direct response to a natural disaster here or in another state is price gouging. Under Tennessee law, price gougers can be subject to a \$1,000 civil penalty for each violation. Price gouging is also a criminal offense in Tennessee.

Consumers who believe they may have been charged unreasonably for a good, commodity or service should complete the online complaint form at <http://www.state.tn.us/consumer/consCompFrm.html> or call 1-800-342-8385 to report price gouging activities. Consumers are asked to provide as many details as possible including the station, location of the station, the price of the gas, and grade of the gas.